

# Kentucky Teacher

February 2009

News for the Nation's Most Innovative Educators

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## Reading First second to none in Kentucky classrooms

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# Kentucky Teacher

News for the Nation's Most Innovative Educators

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*Kentucky Teacher* is published by the Kentucky Department of Education for teachers, school administrators, counselors, support staff, parents, students, legislators, community leaders and others with a stake in public education. Please address correspondence to *Kentucky Teacher*, 612 Capital Plaza Tower, 500 Mero St., Frankfort, KY 40601; e-mail [kyteacher@education.ky.gov](mailto:kyteacher@education.ky.gov).

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Printed with state funds by LexPress,  
Lexington, Ky., on recycled paper  
ISSN 1526-3584

**Front cover:** Venita Graves works with kindergarten student Zy'Annah Mullins during reading time at Thomas Edison Elementary School (Covington Independent). Thomas Edison is a Reading First school. Photo by Amy Wallot

## Talk to the Experts ...

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## ON YOUR MIND

Your Feedback from the *Kentucky Teacher* Inbox

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I read your article in (*Kentucky Teacher*) "Two Social Security provisions cut teachers' retirement money," (October 2008) and felt I needed to reply. I am one of those people who have 20 years of employment in the private sector. Based on what I understand, I will only be eligible for approximately 40 percent of my Social Security benefits because I am currently employed as a Kentucky teacher. I worked for 20 years and paid into Social Security ALREADY. This SHOULD mean that I am eligible to draw Social Security based on what I already paid. If the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) were repealed, then it would just mean that those of us who have already worked and paid into Social Security could draw their full benefits. Teachers who are going to draw their full 27 years' teacher retirement would not pay into Social Security, or draw from it, and would not be affected by this at all. I agree

that I would much rather have the full KTRS amount of pension, but since I will never be able to reach my full 27 years, then I should be entitled to FULL Social Security benefits that have already been paid.

**Kathy Ayers, teacher**  
Hopkins County school district

I just finished reading your article about "Two Social Security provisions cut teachers' retirement money" (October 2008). You have left out some very important information. Not only are my Social Security benefits that I earned before becoming a teacher cut drastically, but the Social Security benefits that my husband has earned are also reduced. If my husband was killed on the job, his children cannot draw his Social Security because I chose to be a teacher. My husband has worked hard and put me through college. We also have three sons that he has put through college — one of which chose to be a teacher.

**Melissa Wallace, teacher**  
Hancock County school district

My husband was a disabled Vietnam veteran, but fully vested in Social Security. I received his \$250 burial benefit and may receive a portion of his benefits as long as I

don't retire. I am fully vested in Social Security also, but will only be eligible to draw about one-third of my earned benefit due to these penalties.

I don't think any teacher wants to be treated differently because we chose to devote our careers to education. How can we expect to attract and retain the best and brightest in our profession, and then strip them of the retirement rights they have earned? By the way, these penalties also apply to many of our law enforcement and health department personnel.

I am proud to be representing Kentucky as a NEA Director and will continue to use every opportunity to make our legislators here and in Washington aware of this injustice.

**Elise Mohon, teacher**  
Campbellsville Independent school district

## Farris named interim education commissioner

During a special-called January meeting, the Kentucky Board of Education accepted the resignation of Kentucky Education Commissioner Jon E. Draud and named Deputy Commissioner Elaine Farris as interim commissioner. Farris will serve in that capacity until the position is filled permanently and will not be a candidate for the position.

In December, Draud announced that he would resign his position effective in early February due to health reasons. The board scheduled a special meeting to formally accept his resignation and discuss next steps.

The board also discussed the process to fill the commissioner's position, agreeing to issue a Request for Proposals for a firm to conduct a national search. The board agreed to include all members on a screening committee to review applications for the commissioner's position.

The board's next regular meeting will be Feb. 10 and 11 in Frankfort.

### MORE INFO...

[www.education.ky.gov/JumpTo/?jump=KBOE](http://www.education.ky.gov/JumpTo/?jump=KBOE)



Photo by Amy Wallot

### Collecting cans

First-grade students Brandon Vanarb, left, and Garrett Cook count canned goods at Gallatin County Lower Elementary School's food drive. This year's drive, sponsored by the Family Resource Center, included participation by different grades. Kindergarten classes sort the cans daily by food groups, and 1st-grade classes count the sorted cans daily. Then 2nd- and 3rd-grade classes create bar graphs, which are posted near the canned foods in the front lobby so parents and students are aware of what foods are needed and what foods have surplus.



Farris

## COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

By Jon E. Draud, Commissioner of Education

# Accurate student assessment vital for Kentucky schools

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) is committed to all children reaching proficiency in reading and mathematics and to all children performing at high levels through high-quality teaching and administration and a strong and supportive environment. An essential component toward reaching that goal is the method by which we assess students across the state.

One of my goals as commissioner of education was to convene a task force to look at the state's system of assessment and accountability for public schools. As I start a new chapter in my life after resigning the position of commissioner, I will list the formation of the Task Force on Assessment and Accountability as one of my chief accomplishments.

During seven meetings between August and November 2008, the task force discussed a variety of assessment and accountability issues and heard informational presentations from experts both within and outside the state. Topics ranged from the purposes of assessment systems, writing portfolios, arts and humanities assessments, the characteristics of formative, interim and summative assessments, and the advantages of developing a balanced assessment system with formative and summative components that focus both on assessments *for* and *of* learning.

During the December Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) meeting, the task force presented its recommendations for review. The steps recommended from the task force are:

- **Expand a pilot project that enabled assessment of elementary schools' arts programs.** The project provided the means to measure schools' arts instructional programs against standards for curriculum, instruction, assessment and organizational support for the arts and humanities program. The task force recommended that the project be expanded statewide and to all grade levels. The program-evaluation model for assessment of the arts would be phased in to replace the paper-and-pencil assessment currently administered with full implementation by 2012. Data from the program evaluation would be used to generate a school's academic index for the content area of arts and humanities. The KBE agreed to include the evaluation model in its legislative package.

- **Encourage formative assessments.** Formative assessments are those that encourage learning and provide direct and immediate feedback to students and teachers. Formative assessments provide roadmaps for individual student learning and show how well each student masters standards.
- **Work toward concise standards and balanced assessments.** The task force supported reviewing the state's subject-area standards and ensuring that those are rigorous and relevant. The group also wants a focus on assessments that are accurate and efficient, and provide detailed information on how well students attain specific standards.
- **Provide teacher training and preparation related to assessment.** The goal is to focus on standards and different types of assessment to foster a sense of "assessment literacy" among educators. Assessment literacy will enable educators to use testing

to best meet the needs of students.

Assessment and accountability are polemic topics, and not just in Kentucky. Improvements to Kentucky's assessment and accountability system both pre- and post-2014 are critical to clarifying performance goals for schools so that every Kentucky student may be prepared and proficient. The work of the task force begins the important discussions about the next generation of assessment and accountability in Kentucky.

### Community partnerships in education

In this issue of *Kentucky Teacher*, we profile a school in Marshall County where the local business community has partnered with Calvert City Elementary School to promote a "paperless classroom" for students. This method has brought more variety to the classroom using a visual, fast-paced design. Recently in Pulaski County, Walmart Stores Inc. donated \$30,000 through its State Giving Program to the Center for

Rural Development for the "Ring the Bell for Literacy!" program administered by the school district. This program provides literacy or pre-literacy educational opportunities for children in kindergarten and 1st grade, intergenerational literacy activities where parents/primary caregivers, community members and children come together to learn and read and encourages positive literacy practices for lifelong learning. As I noted in last month's column, literacy proficiency is a goal that should begin for Kentucky students very early in life.

At the December KBE meeting, Al Rider, president and CEO of the North Central Education Foundation in Elizabethtown, received the ninth annual Joseph W. Kelly Award, which is given to businesspeople who have offered outstanding leadership and service toward promoting school improvement and equitable educational opportunities for all Kentucky children. Rider's North Central Education Foundation advocates for P-12, higher education and other community-based learning opportunities. His continuing contributions to improving education include working with the Hardin County schools on the delivery of high-quality instruction and ways to provide career and technical education to students. He also partnered with the Kentucky Council for Economic Education on a grant to help teachers in 15 school districts teach economics and financial literacy. It's a privilege to recognize such an advocate for our students and educators.

KDE understands that you need all the tools available to do your jobs effectively, and I'm encouraged to have so many allies working with us to reach our common goal of maintaining Kentucky's education progress and getting all schools to proficiency.

### A fond farewell

I've received notes of encouragement and praise from many of you related to the announcement of my resignation as commissioner. I want you to know that I appreciate all of your kind wishes. I truly believe that Kentucky's teachers are the finest in the nation, and I know that you will carry on with your good work, despite any hurdles and obstacles. Thank you for your outstanding service – you've made my time as commissioner a pleasure.



Photo by Amy Wallot

Commissioner Jon E. Draud smiles as 1st-grade student Jacob Oakes asks if he is the president during Lesley Webb's class at Fourth Street Elementary School (Newport Independent) during a visit with former U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings in March 2008.

# 'No one left behind' at May Valley Elementary

By Matthew Tungate

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A student at May Valley Elementary School (Floyd County) announces the school's mantra every morning: "No novice, no apprentice, no one left behind."

It is a school with almost 350 students, 75 percent of whom are economically disadvantaged, with no students who scored novice in grades 3-5 on the most recent Kentucky Core Content Tests (KCCT).

It is for those reasons and more that May Valley was named a 2008 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Blue Ribbon School along with three other state public elementary schools. The award recognizes schools that help students achieve at high levels and that make significant progress in closing achievement gaps. The program rewards schools that score in the top 10 percent statewide in reading and mathematics on state assessments. Blue Ribbon Schools also must make Adequate Yearly Progress under the requirements of the federal NCLB Act.

Principal Tonya Williams said the school uses its Title I budget to supplement staffing, which allows the school to achieve a 12:1 teacher-student ratio in intermediate grades. The school implemented team teaching in grades 3-5 three years ago, which ensures that reading and mathematics classes have two or three teachers in the classroom at once.

"If I had to pick one particular strategy at May Valley that I feel has made us successful, it would be team teaching," she said. "My perspective and my staff's perspective is reading and math are two of the most important content areas that students need in life to be successful, first and foremost. Then we also look at CATS, and the greatest weight in elementary is math and reading."

One teacher may lead the lesson and the other two will circulate



Photo by Amy Wallot

Teacher Michelle Castle helps 3rd-grade students Hannah Martin, left, and Elizabeth Shepherd with tips for multiplying by six at May Valley Elementary School (Floyd County), a Blue Ribbon School.

and offer individual assistance to students, Williams said. At other times, all three teachers may teach at once, she said. Using this approach, teachers score daily and weekly assessments more quickly, providing students with immediate feedback. This allows one of the teachers to re-teach to students who struggled on the test, Williams said.

"It ensures mastery level learning for all students," she said.

Three of the six classrooms in her intermediate wing have two teachers' desks. "Our teachers don't just share the teaching responsibilities," she said, "they share a classroom."

"It is a true team effort throughout our building, and we could not be this successful if all teachers did not work together."

For instance, a 5th-grade mathematics teacher team teaches with the 4th-grade mathematics teacher and teaches one section in 3rd grade. "This allows him to focus

entirely on our math program and providing consistency at all levels," Williams said.

Kimberly Reed, a 4th/5th-grade language arts teacher, said both students and teachers benefit from team teaching. Students get additional time for one-on-one instruction; get greater teacher feedback during instruction; see multiple perspectives and teaching styles; witness the importance of teamwork as a life skill; and receive greater continuity of instruction.

Teachers have an equal distribution of responsibilities such as lesson plans, instruction, grading papers and discipline; a broader knowledge base; more time efficiency; and greater opportunities for re-teaching concepts, Reed said.

"The benefits of team teaching have created the foundation/cornerstone on which our success has been established," she said.

Williams said teachers also have high expectations for students and

don't allow economic status to be used as an excuse for not excelling.

"Regardless of how students come to us, it's our responsibility to ensure they make needed gains to get to where they're expected to perform," Williams said. "We don't allow that to be an excuse for our students not to succeed. We have the same expectations for every single child regardless of his or her socioeconomic background."

Reed said teachers set high expectations for students and for themselves and constantly communicate that to students.

"They know that they are responsible and accountable for meeting our expectations as well as their own," she said. "We can never stereotype our students based merely on the status of their socioeconomic levels. Granted, this can and is many times an obstacle, but it is never to be perceived as a barrier to their educational success."

For example, Assistant Principal

This is the second profile in a series about the four Kentucky Blue Ribbon Schools. The December-January issue of *Kentucky Teacher* featured Highland Elementary (Davess County), followed by profiles in later issues on Veterans Park Elementary (Fayette County) and White Hall Elementary (Madison County).

Greta Thornsberry said teachers will not accept any open-response answers in the classroom below proficient level.

"If a student turns in an apprentice work sample, that student has to make revisions until at least a proficient sample is produced," she said.

Open-response questions are a big part of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS), and May Valley uses the same format from kindergarten through 5th grade, Williams said.

"So our students are taught at an early age, in kindergarten, 'This is an open response, this is how we set it up,'" she said. "I think this consistency allows us to better prepare our students for CATS open-response."

Williams said all primary classrooms have their reading block at the same time each day, and every student – regardless of age – is placed in a reading group based on ability. For example, kindergartners may read with 1st- or 2nd-graders, and 3rd-graders may read with 4th- or 5th-graders.

"We start this at an early age," she said. "Our Head Start/pre-school students also participate in reading at the kindergarten level if they have the necessary skills."

Kathy Shepherd, another 4th/5th-grade language arts teacher, said teachers should always be open to new ideas and not be afraid to try new things.

"A positive attitude can bring positive results," she said. "Over the past three years, May Valley has made changes and these changes have proven to be advantageous. May Valley's faculty and staff are continually looking for ways to improve."

## MORE INFO ...

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# Preschool learning, assessment thrives in Harlan County

**Jennifer Brock**

Harlan Independent School District

When Patricia Bryson first followed her heart to provide enrichment for at-risk children in Harlan County 23 years ago, preschool was not a state-funded program.

She started the Sunshine School in a small room above a business she owned. When discussions about state funding for preschool began, the superintendent of the Harlan Independent school district encouraged Bryson to make her program a part of the district. Seeing this as an opportunity for the program to grow, she moved the Sunshine School to a classroom that previously was used for storage in a district-owned building.

Over the years, the Sunshine School has served hundreds of children and grown to fill the original building as well as several small houses nearby that were converted to classrooms. During the development and growth of the program, which now includes nine half-day classes and serves approximately 120 students per year, there have been numerous challenges and changes.

Recently, the Kentucky Department of Education provided updated guidelines and requirements for preschool assessment.

"Assessment — the very word gives me a tight feeling in my stomach," said Bryson. "Since the moment I walked into my first class of 3-year-olds, I have been like a bulldog, protecting them from anything that looks like a standardized test. I simply don't believe in it."

Bryson and her fellow teachers, including me, were not sure what to expect when we attended a training highlighting the state-approved assessment choices. The school not only had to choose a program to match its philosophy and that would be useful for our students, but also had to choose a system the staff would buy into and use.

Eager to put the system into action, Bryson introduced the Early Childhood Creative Curriculum and Continuous Assessment to our staff. "It was scary at first," she admitted. "While the staff loved the use of classroom observations and continuous progress checkpoints instead of a test, the amount of paperwork was overwhelming."

Teachers tried many different ways of recording observations and keeping track of the mountains of records, but discovered that the hardest part was keeping up with it all and finding an efficient way to store everything. A solution appeared when I attended training and was introduced to CreativeCurriculum.net, a system designed to streamline the tasks of managing ongoing assessment



Photos by Amy Wallot

Sunshine School teacher Jennifer Brock takes notes as Zachery Blanton, right, and Danny Blanton look at slides of insects during class at the Sunshine School preschool (Harlan Independent).

and reporting state early learning standards.

Now in the third year of using the Early Childhood Creative Curriculum and Continuous Assessment and second year with CreativeCurriculum.net, the staff at the Sunshine School is more comfortable and knowledgeable in observing and reporting on the 50 objectives included in the curriculum. The objectives cover social, emotional, physical, cognitive and language development.

"Over time, the observations made by teachers provide a clear picture of how the children are progressing while actively engaged in activities," Bryson explained.

The teachers use the developing picture to plan the next step of instruction for each child. The online program offers a convenient way to store observations, upload photos of children working and scan actual work samples into individual portfolios. There also is an extensive activity library for teachers to access that provides scaffolded instruction to help teachers take students to the next level of development.

For the Sunshine School staff, the most exciting part has been developing partnerships with families.

"The teachers at Sunshine School are

working diligently to help parents understand that preschool success is not measured in grades or papers but continuous progress and development of the whole child," Bryson said. "Parents are getting used to seeing photos and narratives instead of polished products."

Parents also can access the Web site and an activity library filled with family-friendly ideas for helping their children. Teachers and families communicate through the program's journal feature, which allows teachers to send photos and written observations to parents through e-mail. Parents also can respond to teachers.

"I love it. It allows me a glimpse into my daughter's day," said Margaret Miracle, parent of a 4-year-old at the Sunshine School.

Standing in the face of challenge and change is never easy, but "if we encourage one family or better meet the needs of one child, it is worth every ounce of effort," Bryson said.

## MORE INFO ...

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Teaching assistant Edna Blackburn helps Hatdon Smith with writing his name during Jennifer Brock's class at Sunshine School preschool.

# Project trains teachers to imbed literacy into content areas

By Matthew Tungate

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Forty-six teachers at 52 schools in 29 districts are helping train their colleagues to integrate literacy instruction into content-area classes in grades 4-12.

The Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project (ALCP) is a professional-development initiative offered by the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development (CCLD) in collaboration with the Kentucky Department of Education and the state's eight public universities.

According to the CCLD, a literacy coach is different from a reading specialist, who works with struggling readers in small groups or one-on-one. A literacy coach is charged with working with content-area teachers to help them infuse literacy strategies into the curriculum. Coaches may model instruction, observe and provide feedback, and lead teacher inquiry groups and professional development sessions.

Anderson County High School Literacy Coach Jimmy Jackson said the ultimate purpose of the project is to improve teacher effectiveness integrating literacy into content area courses grades 4-12. This change in teacher practice will, in turn, have a ripple effect and increase student academic achievement.

"The literacy coach provides whole-school professional development focusing on the use of reading strategies in the content-area classroom," he said. "The literacy coach also provides full-time imbedded professional development for individual teachers who want to learn more about reading strategies."

Jackson said reading and writing are not subjects, they are skills that students use in all classes.

"Many teachers at the high school level have a great knowledge in their subject areas, but they may lack knowledge of reading strategies and their importance," he said. "In order for our schools to make advancements in literacy, these reading strategies should be used in all content area classrooms."

Madisonville North Hopkins High School Literacy Coach Jason Clark said he experienced that firsthand.

"As a high school teacher, it was imperative that my students possessed age-appropriate reading levels to comprehend my content area. Unfortunately, this was rarely the case even in honors classes," he said. "I believe all content area teachers want success for their students, but the students don't always

come to us with the reading skills they need to be successful; therefore, it is the teacher's literacy skills that are tantamount to student success."

Jackson County Middle School Literacy Coach Jean Spurlock said helping teachers help students feels good and expanded her knowledge as well.

"As a literacy coach, I have learned to work with each individual teacher to meet his or her own students' needs, while incorporating literacy," Spurlock said. "When working with teachers that are hungry for new ideas and grateful for the assistance, the benefits are very rewarding. For the last two years, I have researched for every content area teacher in my school and have learned how to develop lesson plans for each subject area."

Coaches serve as liaisons between instructional leaders, teachers and administrators, according to the CCDL. They assess the school's literacy needs, disseminate relevant data, work with teachers to refine their instructional practices and collaborate to create a literacy plan for the entire school.

McCreary Central High School Literacy Coach Jennifer Simpson said a literacy program can improve a school.

"This program addresses student needs at the individual, classroom and whole-school levels. There is a uniform and coordinated plan of action at all of these levels," she said. "The literacy coach is able to provide a full time focus to this program to see that it is

## Want to be a literacy coach?

CCLD and KDE recommend the following qualifications and associated skills for a literacy coach:

### Qualifications

- strong foundation in literacy
- strong leadership skills
- familiarity with adult learning
- familiarity with learners between grades 4-12
- skilled classroom teacher

### Associated skills

- school level planner
- advisor to administration
- mediator between school, community and university organizations
- researcher
- experience in specific content area
- strong personal literacy and communication skills
- presentation skills
- interpersonal skills

With recent budget cuts, CCLD is not taking applications for the 2008-10 cadre, but is conducting an interest survey at <http://www.kentuckyliteracy.org/alcp/ALCP%20pdfs/ALCPInterestSurvey.pdf>.



Photo by Amy Wallot

*Literacy Coach Jimmy Jackson engages students in vocabulary questions about a current events article in Steven Rucker's World Civilization/English II class at Anderson County High School.*

being carried out and is effective. One element of this program is reading assessment. Student reading assessments are administered, the results are analyzed, and appropriate actions are taken. The literacy coach is able to look at the big picture but never forgets the school's responsibility to the individual student."

The school literacy plan is especially important to students who come from needy families, Jackson said.

"We can find a lot of struggling readers in our free and reduced-price school meal programs," he said. "These students oftentimes do not have books at home, their parents don't read, and reading is not valued. It is among this student population that great literacy gains can be made."

Clark said prior to his position, teachers would have to search for resources and best practices on their own.

"Now that a job-imbedded professional-development person is available, they have the opportunity to spend more time in the classroom honing newfound skills as opposed to continually searching for research-based best practices on their own time," he said.

Literacy coaches attend eight-day summer academies focusing on areas such as literacy coaching and mentoring, effective literacy instruction, assessment in reading/liter-

acy and professional learning communities. Literacy coaches also attend a content-literacy professional-development workshop sponsored by the state Department of Education and monthly professional-development and coaching networking sessions.

Spurlock said the conferences, meetings and networking have been very helpful in doing the job.

"My experience working as a literacy coach has been one of the most exciting and rewarding jobs I've had in 23 years of teaching," she said. "Kentucky schools that haven't had the benefit of a literacy coach have missed out on many rewards and accomplishments."

Simpson recommends that schools seeking to improve the quality of their literacy programs consider hiring a trained literacy coach.

"If you are passionate about literacy and enjoy working with colleagues in your building and around the state, I recommend looking into becoming a literacy coach," she said. "I have truly enjoyed the past two years, and I think I am a better teacher today because of the opportunity to learn from so many great coaches."

## MORE INFO...

[www.kentuckyliteracy.org/alcp/](http://www.kentuckyliteracy.org/alcp/)

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# Principals have DAT extra knowledge

In the November 2008 issue, *Kentucky Teacher* profiled Developing Algebraic Thinking (DAT) and its impact on elementary school teachers and students in Lee and Carter counties. The second part of this story deals with the principal component of DAT.

By Susan Riddell

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Elementary school principals in Lee and Carter counties have been going back to school the past two years, and what they are learning is making mathematics comprehension better for students in their schools.

"As an educator, I feel better prepared to examine how we teach to improve student understanding and develop problem solvers," Beattyville Elementary School (Lee County) Principal Maureen Patrick said about her participation in the program. "Personally speaking, I can say that my teachers have completely changed the way we teach math at my school. ... As concerned educators, we are implementing math lessons that encourage improved student achievement and cognitive understanding. What better results could we want?"

Patrick and her fellow elementary principals in Lee and Carter counties have been attending monthly meetings since September 2007. The meetings are a part of the DAT program and use Lenses on Learning resources.

Teachers also are meeting monthly for the DAT program, but they meet separately from the principals.

DAT is a two-year project exploring how algebra in the primary education levels establishes the groundwork that is crucial for future learning in mathematics.

Lee and Carter counties are in the second year of implementing DAT into all district elementary schools with the help of

grant money from the Partnership Institute for Math and Science Education Reform (PIMSER) at the University of Kentucky and the Kentucky Department of Education.

Testing shows DAT is working in both school districts. All eight elementary schools (six in Carter County and two in Lee County) met their annual measurable objectives in mathematics for the 2007-08 school year, and Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) mathematics indices improved by at least 4.37 points in each district.

While principals and teachers meet separately, both groups are learning the same fundamentals of DAT, as well as strategies for implementation in the classrooms.

The principals, some with mathematics backgrounds and some without, have found ways through the group sessions to get on the same page when it comes to helping their respective teachers.

"This is almost like a principal support group because it's a unique venue for them to have discussions about issues they may not be comfortable with, questions they still have about math teaching and learning," said Rhonda Allen, a PIMSER regional teaching partner working with both counties. "The administrators jelled as a learning community very early. Although the demographics and math

programs in the schools are different, the principals have similar needs and concerns.

"At each session, the principals are doing the work the math teachers are doing," Allen added. "Teachers appreciate the principals' work. As one teacher shared, 'This is the best thing that ever happened to my principal. He helped me teach a math lesson I wasn't comfortable with. I felt like we were a team.'"

According to Jason McGlone, principal at Prichard Elementary School (Carter County), the typical work session includes a review of literature produced by Lenses on Learning.



Photo by Amy Wallot

Lee and Carter counties principals have a monthly meeting in Mount Sterling to talk about mathematics in their schools. Pictured are Carter County principals Jason McGlone, left, Tim Johnson and Cherri Keaton.

"The literature discusses a variety of issues from varying instructional strategies, meaning professional development, pedagogy and leadership issues such as classroom walk-throughs and evaluations," McGlone said.

The next part of the session deals with a condensed version of what the DAT team accomplished at its previous meeting, and trainers introduce real application processes for teaching mathematics.

"We wrap up the session with discussions about improvement in our own school," McGlone said. "How is this going to affect student achievement where we are now? Each school is slightly different, but we always come away with beneficial ideas."

Patrick indicated those discussions are critical in giving the principals insight for the best ways to work with teachers using DAT.

"Principals are able to discuss openly in a non-threatening environment key strategies to help teachers overcome obstacles to improve math instruction, promote better student understanding and encourage teachers to make important changes in the way they teach math," Patrick said.

These training sessions also benefit principals, who leave with a better understanding of the teacher observation/evaluation process.

"When principals are in the classroom, there's the impression that it's strictly in an evaluative way. We didn't want to approach classroom observations from that perspective," Allen said. "We talk about what follow-up conversations to have with teachers to support improved instructional practice in mathematics."

"Teachers and principals are more likely to be on the same page now – common

math vocabulary, common expectations, etc," Allen added. "When Vonda Stamm (a PIMSER Regional Teaching Partner) and I observe math classrooms with the principals, we have found we are all pretty consistent in what we see in terms of needs and strengths."

McGlone and Patrick agree that DAT and the Lenses on Learning have made them stronger educators.

"What stood out to me in my journey to improve student understanding and achievement have been the numerous changes I have made in my own personal thinking on how students learn," Patrick said. "... I have evolved to a much deeper level of understanding due to the opportunities I have had to learn along with my teachers. The training I have received has helped me know what to look for during my teacher observations. I have been equipped with a valuable knowledge base that allows me to give teachers valid and creditable suggestions to improve lessons, share teaching strategies and verbalize math talk."

"From a financial standpoint," McGlone added, "I have to ensure that the program is cost-effective. The Kentucky Department of Education and our local district invest money in the development of our teachers. If I am not a good steward of our resources and opportunities I am given, then I am not doing my job. ... If our teachers are incorporating DAT concepts in their classrooms, then I feel that we are spending money correctly, and our students are benefitting."

## MORE INFO...

[www2.edc.org/CDT/cdt/cdt\\_lol1.html](http://www2.edc.org/CDT/cdt/cdt_lol1.html)  
Rhonda Allen, [allenrhonda@bellsouth.net](mailto:allenrhonda@bellsouth.net)

# Hail to the math, science chiefs

By Matthew Tungate

matthew.tungate@education.ky.gov

Jeffrey Wright is a former Kentucky Teacher of the Year and a National Board Certified mentor teacher. If there is a teaching award in Jefferson County or Kentucky, the Male High School integrated science, general physics and Advanced Placement physics teacher likely has won it.

But the first time he applied for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, he was rejected. The presidential award is the highest recognition that a kindergarten through 12th-grade mathematics or science teacher may receive for outstanding teaching in the United States. No more than 108 may be bestowed each year by the National Science Foundation on behalf of the White House.

## Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching fast facts

### Why apply?

Recipients of the award receive:

- a citation signed by the president of the United States
- a paid trip for two to Washington, D.C., to attend a weeklong series of recognition events and professional development opportunities
- gifts from program sponsors from around the country
- a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation

### Who is eligible?

Nominees must:

- be highly qualified teachers, as deemed by their states, districts or schools
- hold a degree or appropriate credentials in the category for which they are applying
- teach in one of the 50 states or four U.S. jurisdictions
- be full-time employees of the school or school district and teach science or mathematics
- have at least five years of mathematics or science teaching experience prior to application.
- not have received the national presidential award in any prior competition or category
- be a secondary teacher (grades 7-12) to apply for 2009; elementary teachers (K-6th grades) may apply in 2010

Keri Dowdy, Sedalia Elementary School (Graves County) 4th-grade teacher, and intervention teacher Kris Jarboe of Elkhorn Middle School (Franklin County) are the 2008 nominees from Kentucky in science and mathematics, respectively.

But the application is rigorous: a minimum 15-page written application, 30 minutes of uninterrupted classroom video and analysis, 30 additional minutes of video that can be edited and letters of recommendation, among other requirements.

"I never thought I was good enough, but that is not why I ended up doing it," Wright said. "You do it for the mere fact that it's going to make you a better teacher."

Jennifer Terry, an 8th-grade mathematics teacher at North Oldham Middle School, is a National Board Certified teacher as well, among many other accolades. But she, too, had applied and didn't receive the award.

"I decided to reapply because I grew so much from that first one that I knew that it was going to be a rewarding experience no matter

if I won or not because it really does make you analyze what you are doing as a teacher and to see if you are using best practices," she said. "I think sometimes we're harder on ourselves and we think, 'Oh no, I would never win something like that.' But all it takes is somebody who loves the subject and loves teaching kids, and that would show through."

Wright and Terry are the 2007 Kentucky award winners in science and mathematics teaching, respectively. The 2008 winners won't be named until late spring.

The deadline for 2009 nominations is April 1, with an application deadline of May 1. This year the teachers will come from grades 7-12, with nominations go before a state selection committee, which nominates no more than three teachers in each subject. The National Science Foundation chooses the awardees.

Sean Elkins, Kentucky Department of Education science consultant and Kentucky science presidential awards coordinator, sets up the state selection committee, which is looking for five dimensions of teaching on the application:

1. mastery of content
2. quality instructional strategies
3. effective student assessment
4. reflective practice
5. participation in professional development

The applicants must be good at every aspect of teaching, Elkins said. "These aren't one-dimensional teachers," he said. "These are well-rounded educators."

Charma Linville, mathematics consultant for the state department of education and state mathematics coordinator for the presidential awards, said teachers should be enthusiastic and caring; help his/her students better understand and



Photo by Amy Wallot

Jennifer Terry discusses a problem with her students during her geometry class at North Oldham Middle School. Terry is the Kentucky 2007 winner of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching for mathematics.

appreciate mathematics; and show a strength in content knowledge and a genuine love of learning.

Elkins said nominations and applications are done online at [www.paemst.org](http://www.paemst.org) and are rigorous for a reason.

"These teachers represent the president of the United States of America," Elkins said. "It's not an accident that one of the ultimate criteria that you have to go through before you're announced as a state-level winner is you have to pass an FBI background check."

Elkins said applicants can really help themselves by turning in a classroom video that focuses on student learning, not on teacher lecturing.

"The unsuccessful videos were 30 minutes of watching the teacher talk to the kids and asking a couple of questions," he said. "The strong videos were the teacher setting up the concept, setting up the background and then moving into the kids doing some learning themselves while we saw the teacher circulating. It wasn't all about the teaching, it was about the learning."

Wright said the application, including having to record a lesson and analyze it, is where teachers really get the benefits of the award.

"When you get ready to do a lesson, you don't just do it by the seat of your pants," he said. "You really plan and say, 'What are my outcomes going to be?'"

Terry agreed, saying the presidential award and National Board Certification are very

similar in that regard.

"Sometimes as teachers we get so busy in everyday things that we don't take the time to really analyze and probe and look at some of the questions they make you look at," she said. "It's just a great journey to take because you get this opportunity to step back and analyze your teaching."

Elkins said he doesn't know how many applications to expect this year. More grades 7-12 teachers apply than K-6 teachers, though.

"A lot of really excellent teachers of science (in grades K-6) don't think of themselves as science teachers because science is a small part of what they do in the rest of the day," he said. "So even though the 50 minutes or an hour a day they spend with their kids doing science is of presidential quality, they never really imagine themselves as science teachers."

Wright encouraged teachers to nominate an outstanding colleague and said those who are nominated should complete the application.

"You can get all the rewards you want, and it's wonderful to get them, but when you look at how much it makes you improve, that's the real reason behind them," he said.

## MORE INFO...

[www.paemst.org](http://www.paemst.org)  
Sean Elkins, [sean.elkins@education.ky.gov](mailto:sean.elkins@education.ky.gov)  
Charma Linville, [charma.linville@education.ky.gov](mailto:charma.linville@education.ky.gov)

# Book is a strong reminder that violence isn't the answer

Reviewed by Susan Riddell

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Missy Jenkins Smith is a Day Treatment Center counselor for Calloway County schools. She has been married for several years to her college sweetheart and has a young son. By all accounts, she has a great life, despite the fact she spends most of her days in a wheelchair.

After becoming one of the victims in the Heath High School (McCracken County) shooting more than 11 years ago, Smith also has become the face of the shooting. As the most severely-injured surviving student, she has taken on this role with her head held high and voice actively talking to others about her experiences.

She became a celebrity nationwide, appearing on numerous talk shows and specials including "The Oprah Winfrey Show" and "Dateline." Whenever there has been another high school shooting, she is regularly called by reporters wanting her reaction. She has participated in public-service announcements and several other noteworthy avenues to share her story. While so many hide from the microphone or the camera after going through a tragedy, Smith uses public appearances to help her heal, to force herself to deal with her emotions. Mainly, however, she tries to get the message across to others that violence is never the answer.

Missy Jenkins Smith writes about her experiences leading up to and following that ominous day, Dec. 1, 1997, in her book, "I Choose to be Happy: A School Shooting Survivor's Triumph Over Tragedy." This book serves as a strong reminder about how one act can touch the lives of so many and how it can force a nation to evaluate how schools have protected those who walk their halls.

Smith's actions following the shooting have served as a glimpse of hope and a wealth of knowledge

about how schools can best protect teachers and students.

This book could easily be added to preferred reading lists for all high school students. It's a learning tool like most books in school. What makes this book ideal for high school students is that Smith writes in the voice of a student. She puts the reader in that hallway that morning, with raw, vivid details about who was standing where and what happened to those who couldn't escape the bullets.

With her unique voice of experience, students can learn from her story and understand that actions have consequences.

Middle school students could benefit from this book, too. Her message is simple in that it's easy to see the ramifications of bullying, even in the mildest of forms, even when the student getting picked on seems to take it in stride. Her message is also strong, however, in terms of overcoming obstacles and getting help for students if they feel like their only outlet is violence.

The best example of this in her book is a powerful 17-page transcript of an interview conducted just two hours after the shooting with shooter Michael Carneal, his attorney and a McCracken County police detective. Her book also has the capability of showing a student the future should someone decide to resort to violence. The book goes into great detail during Carneal's sentencing with excerpts from victims, their family members, family members of those fatally wounded and the judge as he rendered the sentence: 20 years in prison for burglary, 20 years in prison each on five counts of attempted murder and three concurrent life sentences without the possibility of parole for 25 years for the murdered victims.

Missy Jenkins Smith doesn't hold back in her personal tale. After guiding you through the shooting, she discusses her lengthy stay in



Photo by Amy Wallot

Missy Jenkins Smith autographs a book at the Kentucky Book Fair in Frankfort on Nov. 15, 2008. Smith was a victim in the Heath High School shooting on Dec. 1, 1997, in Paducah.

the hospital followed by her rehabilitation stint in Lexington's Cardinal Hill Hospital. That's when she faced the daunting task of learning to go about her life in a wheelchair.

She discusses the good times and bad when she returned to Paducah, her first day back at Heath High School, dating and staying active in school, not to mention how she viewed things that once seemed so insignificant.

Smith doesn't cut Carneal any slack, either. She forgives him, but holds him accountable for his actions that fateful day. That's a fine line most people can never properly navigate.

"Forgiveness does not exonerate a person from responsibility or punishment for what he or she did," she writes. "It's an acknowledgement that he or she did something wrong, that we realize we

all make errors in judgment. ...

"Michael's errors were ruthless," she continues. "Nobody on earth expected me to forgive him for what he did – not even Michael. I had every right to be angry with him for the rest of my life. He robbed me of my ability to walk, murdered my friends, nearly killed my sister, and scarred so many people emotionally. He planned the crime and chose to commit the crime. He needed to face the consequences. Punishment was justified. But it didn't mean I couldn't forgive him."

## MORE INFO...

[www.missyjenkins.com](http://www.missyjenkins.com)

[www.langmarc.com/ichoosetobehappy](http://www.langmarc.com/ichoosetobehappy)

"I Choose to be Happy: A School Shooting Survivor's Triumph Over Tragedy" by Missy Jenkins Smith with William Croyle (\$16.95)

## Like to recommend a new resource?

Have you read a book or professional article, used new software or visited a Web site you'd like to recommend to other educators? If so, you can reach nearly 54,000 teachers, administrators and education stakeholders by submitting a review of the resource to *Kentucky Teacher* for publication.

To receive information on writing for our publication — content, article length and deadlines — contact us by e-mail at [kyteacher@education.ky.gov](mailto:kyteacher@education.ky.gov) or by postal mail at *Kentucky Teacher*, Kentucky Department of Education, 612 Capital Plaza Tower, Frankfort, KY 40601.

# Teacher resources available for Lincoln Bicentennial

As part of the celebration of the Lincoln Bicentennial, a group of Kentucky teachers has developed lessons and units focusing on the accomplishments, character traits and leadership of Abraham Lincoln.

The Lincoln Bicentennial Teacher Network, a partnership between the Kentucky Department of Education and the Underground Railroad Research Institute at Georgetown College, consists of 17 teachers from across the state. Over a period of a year, the network created content-specific and interdisciplinary lessons and standard-based units focusing on Lincoln's accomplishments. These lessons and units are based on Kentucky's content standards in the Program of Studies and Core Content for Assessment.

The teacher network also created tools and support materials to be shared with teachers throughout the state, reaching all students in grades K-12. The lessons are meant to be integrated into existing curricula and focus on Lincoln's character, leadership and legacy. Content

and focus for the lessons are tied to Kentucky's Academic Expectations and subject-area content for each grade level:

- primary level (grades K-3) — why and how we remember significant individuals, such as Abraham Lincoln, who have impacted history
- 4th grade — Lincoln's ties to Kentucky and how that affected his character and leadership skills
- 5th grade — Lincoln's leadership skills and the decisions he made as president
- 8th grade — a unit on Lincoln's leadership during a time of crisis
- high school — Lincoln's suspension of the Writ of Habeas Corpus and the analysis of Lincoln's design for Reconstruction through the plans of his successors

These lessons are enriched with learning experiences that allow the students to understand the decisions that Lincoln had to make during his presidency.

In addition, the Lincoln School Toolkit, a set of resources designed to make Lincoln's 200th birthday a statewide educational opportunity for students, is now available. The toolkit includes lesson plans, primary source materials, video resources, and a Feb. 12, 2009, learning resource sheet. All materials are tied to Kentucky standards.

Many of these toolkit resources are available on the Kentucky Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission's (KALBC) Web site at [www.kylincoln.org](http://www.kylincoln.org). In addition, each of Kentucky's K-12 schools will receive a 14-minute educational DVD titled "Lincoln: The Kentucky Years" produced by Kentucky Educational Television. Some grade levels will receive a Feb. 12, 2009, activity sheet, which also can be downloaded on the KALBC Web site.

## MORE INFO...

<http://lincoln.georgetowncollege.edu>  
[www.kylincoln.org](http://www.kylincoln.org)



Photo by Amy Wallot

## Working hard

Freshmen Joseph Smallwood, Kathryn Deckard, center, and Katie Wilson make up missed work in the hallway at Pendleton County High School.

## Changed your address? Let us know

If you don't want to miss an issue of *Kentucky Teacher*, please take a few moments to learn how to let us know when your address changes.

*Kentucky Teacher* receives mailing addresses for all active Kentucky certified classroom teachers and administrators from the Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System. If you are a certified employee of a Kentucky public school, you can change your mailing information in one of two ways:

- Complete a change of address form that can be downloaded from the retirement system's Web site at [http://ktrs.ky.gov/01\\_active\\_members/B\\_change\\_name.htm](http://ktrs.ky.gov/01_active_members/B_change_name.htm).
- Submit a written request that includes your name, old address, new address, Social Security number and your signature.

Mail the form or your written request to:

Kentucky Teachers'  
Retirement System  
ATTN: Tammy Brown  
479 Versailles Rd.  
Frankfort, KY 40601

If you are not a current teacher or administrator, e-mail your change of address to [kyteacher@education.ky.gov](mailto:kyteacher@education.ky.gov) or by mail to:

*Kentucky Teacher*  
612 Capital Plaza Tower  
500 Mero St.  
Frankfort, KY 40601

## Nearly 250 teachers in Kentucky National Board Certified for 2008

Teaching quality in Kentucky classrooms made a substantial gain in 2008 with 232 state teachers achieving National Board Certification, according to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Kentucky ranked 11th nationwide in the number of new National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) and ranks 12th in the total number of teachers who achieved certification over time (1,608).

Nearly 60 percent (58.7) of the state's NBCTs teach in Title I-eligible schools. The state's top five school districts in total NBCTs are: Jefferson (97), Oldham (96), Fayette (85), Kenton (52) and Hardin (50) counties.

Kentucky NBCTs joined the ranks of 9,600 accomplished teachers nationwide who achieved certification in 2008, setting a national record for the second straight year. This achievement brings the number of teachers who achieved National Board Certification to nearly 74,000.

"National Board Certification is a sound investment — a force

in student achievement and a factor in teaching excellence that is reshaping teaching and learning in our schools," said Joseph A. Aguerrebere, president and chief executive officer of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. "At a time when policymakers, educators and the public at large are looking for ways to improve education, a critical element begins with the quality of the teacher in the classroom. We know that each new class of National Board Certified Teachers brings a better chance of providing a highly qualified teacher to every child in America."

National Board Certification is a widely respected model of pay-for-performance and is supported by teachers and administrators nationwide. More than two-thirds of the states provide salary incentives and cover the cost for teachers who pursue and achieve this advanced credential.

## MORE INFO...

[www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org)

# Paperless classroom creates digital learners

By John David Son

Chief Information Officer  
Marshall County School District

When Amanda Mott's students walked into their classroom on the first day of school at Calvert City Elementary School (Marshall County), they all thought they were in the computer lab, not their regular room. "Wow, we all have our own computers!" exclaimed one student.

Mott and her 4th-grade students are embarking on a new way of learning this school year – a paperless classroom. Each of her 26 students has his or her own computers at their desks, and a majority of their assignments are online. The classroom also has a projector and laser printer.

The technology that made the paperless classroom so affordable is a device called the X300, which is made by nComputing. The X300 allows up to six other "virtual computers" to join a host computer, thus providing a total of seven computers for approximately the price of four computers.

Mott said the idea started when she attended the 2007 Kentucky Teaching and Learning Conference. "I found the nComputing company and was intrigued by its product and began researching paperless classrooms across the country," she said.

Mott began the project this past summer by looking at the curriculum standards. Rather than going to textbooks as the first resource, she searched the Web for ideas and found many. "I started a notebook for each content area and each standard and wrote those down," Mott said. "Now I am incorporating them into my classroom lessons on not just a daily, but hourly, basis."

An example of Mott's methods includes sending e-mail writing prompts and graphic organizers to her students, which they can open and manipulate on their screens, then research and type notes straight into their organizers. Mott also uses the online resources available in the school's textbooks to help the students better understand what they are doing in their textbooks.

Even with the new technology, Mott makes it clear that this method is not mandatory,



Photo by Amy Wallio

Teacher Amanda Mott helps 4th-grade student Sarah Knoth with her paper about polar bears in Mott's paperless classroom at Calvert City Elementary School (Marshall County).

but optional.

"While this method may be more efficient than the traditional way of looking up information for one student, any student can choose to take notes with paper and pencil," she said. "Whichever way they are comfortable with is allowed."

Other resources Mott includes in her paperless classroom are United Streaming videos to introduce and reinforce content and Internet Web sites like Spellingcity.com to assess her students' progress. Some of her students also will e-mail questions that they might not feel comfortable asking in front of the entire class.

Mott believes this technology has shifted the teacher's role within the classroom. "Since day one of this school year, my students have been actively engaged and seem to have a new purpose and love for learning," she said. "I have become more of a student-centered facilitator. The students are

taking on more of the responsibility of learning, and I lecture less and aid them in finding answers instead. The information they learn instantly becomes more meaningful because they have taken part in discovering it. They are able to receive immediate feedback on

various activities that sometimes would take days."

Having the technology in a classroom is becoming a necessity, Mott said. "Using the computers helps them build a strong intellectual foundation and encourages higher order thinking skills, creativity and self-driven research," she said. "Students can publish their writing in more interesting ways. We can turn writing pieces into PowerPoint presentations and podcasts. They get authentic reasons to write in blogs, e-mails and wikis."

Principal Phyllis O'Neal said she has seen how Mott is connecting instructionally to the students. "I had a couple of students who really struggled last year getting things down on paper," O'Neal said. "I purposely placed them in this class, hoping that this type of instruction would provide them with a means to communicate what they knew in such a way to enable them to succeed."

Mott has taught for several years and believes her understanding of the content standards has deepened because of this method of teaching. "I feel this method has brought more variety to the classroom and has brought it in a modality that so many of them have learned to expect — a very visual, fast-paced design," she said.

Mott has integrated the paperless teaching methods with the traditional textbook approach. "I have limited textbook use. We still use them occasionally, but I decide on the standard that I am addressing first and

then plan lessons to directly tie into it," she said. "Textbooks no longer dictate what I teach. I find that as I present the core content to them, my students have choices in the way that they learn. They also learn about technology along the way."

Mott also said the technology allows for easy collection of data so she can alter instruction quickly and easily. "Instant polling, chats, the classroom response system, the classroom management software and many interactive Web sites make this possible," she said.

Mott launched this project with the help of donations from area business and community leaders, including Evonik Degussa Corporation, Dr. Barry Wilson, ISP, Regions Bank, Army Reserve and Lubrizol.

The estimated total cost for the project was \$8,035 of which the Kentucky Education Technology System (KETS) provided \$3,498. District funds paid

for the nComputing devices, eInstruction Student Response System, some monitors, tables, keyboards and mice. The district also upgraded the memory in the PCs. However, these costs do not reflect furniture, additional monitors (which were left over from a computer lab upgrade) and additional software that was not purchased at the district level.

Mott's classroom is the only one at Calvert City Elementary using the paperless technology, but O'Neal hopes to expand the program soon. "We are in the process of setting up one other classroom due to an overwhelming outpouring of community support and the intense interest of the other 4th-grade teacher at my school," O'Neal said. "We are very excited about this venture. We see it as a way of teaching that is the way of the future that will definitely benefit our students for years to come."

Mott believes that the 21st century classroom makes good sense in the long run. "In today's generation, we must be realistic that children spend a great deal of time in front of some type of screen, whether it is a Wii, PlayStation, computer, television or other device," she said. "My classroom is constantly evolving as I integrate more and more Web tools to enhance collaboration between teachers, students and the world."

## MORE INFO ...

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## Kentucky Technology Teacher Standards In Action

STANDARD 6: THE TEACHER DEMONSTRATES THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TECHNOLOGY

6.3 Integrates student use of available technology into instruction.

Provides varied and authentic opportunities for all students to use appropriate technology to further their learning.

# Arts teachers can pull from palette of options

By Matthew Tungate

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Garlene Layne-Abshire was already a seasoned veteran when she started teaching at Johns Creek Elementary School (Pike County) in 2006 – she was starting her 12th year in the profession and the year before had attained her National Board Certification in Early Adolescence Through Young Adulthood in Art.

But that first day, she was shocked when her new principal told her she would be teaching only 5th grade and teaching drama and dance as well as her specialty, visual art.

“I had no clue as to how to go about teaching these areas of the core content to 84 young, absorbent minds,” Layne-Abshire said. “Deep down inside I was scared to death to know that I had so much to prepare for, especially

since this was on the CATS (Commonwealth Accountability Testing System) test.”

After doing research on the Web and not being happy with all the confusing things out there, she began questioning her colleagues as to what she should do. They continually suggested “use the KET toolkits.”

Teachers may purchase Arts Toolkits, produced by Kentucky Educational Television in collaboration with the Kentucky Department of Education, in dance, drama, visual arts and music. Each toolkit includes about eight hours of video segments offering instruction, demonstrations, interviews, studio visits and performances; a binder with lesson plans (with assessment components), glossaries, responding guides, guides to state arts resources, and special features

such as informational guides to cultural art and periods and styles; a set of Idea Cards; posters; and discipline-specific features such as the Kentucky Virtual Art Museum on CD-ROM (in Visual Arts) and the From Page to Stage CD-ROM (in Drama). There also is an Arts Toolkit Web site. All resources are aligned with Kentucky academic standards.

Many teachers have been assigned to teach multiple art forms, and most often those teachers have little or no training in them, said Philip Shepherd, arts and humanities consultant at the Kentucky Department of Education.

“For example, a music specialist might find that he or she was being assigned to teach dance or drama as well as music,” he said. “Considering that music specialists are only trained in music, that would be equivalent to assigning a social studies teacher to teach math. The toolkits show teachers how to cross that gap in training.”

Layne-Abshire said the Arts Toolkit lesson plans are helpful in many ways. She made copies of the ones she used and put them directly into her lesson plans binder.

“I know that without the toolkits and the KET Web site to aid me, I would have truly struggled in bringing forth meaningful instruction in dance and drama,” she said.

Jeanne Lee, music consultant in the Harlan County school district, said her district has purchased a complete set of toolkits for every school. In addition, most schools have purchased extra sets as needed so that each arts and humanities teacher has a complete set available. As each new toolkit has been developed and purchased, training has been provided on how to use them.

She said the district uses the toolkits in lesson plans and in developing its curriculum guides. Lee said Harlan teachers also use the assessment items included in the toolkit as well as the performance events. There are several examples of critiques included in



Photo by Amy Wallot

Pendleton County High School junior Alex Carson, center, adds peas to Southern Elementary 3rd-grade student Maria Kordes' rain stick. The ArtStart program in Pendleton County teaches parents and early primary students the value of the arts. According to Gifted and Talented Resource Teacher Michelle Lustenburg, the teachers use the KET Arts Toolkits as resources for their lessons.

each of the toolkits that have been very useful in helping guide students in responding to a particular art form, she said.

“The biggest positive difference the toolkits have made for us is with the use of media that is included,” Lee said. “Being in an extremely rural area, it is impossible for our students to have equitable exposure to arts events such as an art exhibit in a museum, a live concert performance by professional musicians, a theatrical performance or even a ballet. The toolkits have been lifesavers in terms of putting performances by high-quality artists in front of our students. Without them, our kids would not have had those kinds of opportunities.”

Shepherd said KET has a wealth of high-quality media, and the toolkits helped combine those resources with lessons and units of instruction to get examples of performances, images and artists into the classrooms across the state.

“This effectively gives all students the opportunity to experience the arts in a rich and personal manner,” he said.

The toolkits provide engaging and exciting arts content in a manner that supports best practices in instruction, Shepherd said.

“It is like taking a tool out of a toolbox. When you need a hammer, there is one or more in the toolkit,” he said. “When you need to get students excited about the classical period, there are multiple tools in the Arts Toolkits to help make that happen.”

Lee said she would encourage arts and humanities teachers to use the toolkits.

“So much of the work is done for them, and it is high-quality, valid work they can rely on. The lessons engage students so discipline is not an issue,” she said. “Alignment to standards is already done and listed so there is no guessing. The assessments mimic the Kentucky Core Content Test and are very good to use as learning checks or formative assessments. The possibilities for using the toolkits to your advantage are endless.”

## MORE INFO...

[www.ket.org/artstoolkit/](http://www.ket.org/artstoolkit/)  
Philip Shepherd, philip.shepherd@education.ky.gov, (502) 564-2106

## The Arts Toolkit has been designed:

- for the arts classroom as well as for integration into other subject areas. Lesson plans and idea cards are adaptable for both and provide everything from helpful background for teachers who are looking to increase their knowledge and expertise in the arts to new ideas and resources for the experienced arts professional.
- to be easily accessible and user-friendly. In a sense, it is an example of “one-stop shopping,” providing teachers who are strapped for time but looking for good ideas with easy access to a wide variety of resources. Teachers have been involved in all aspects of the project, from the initial prototype testing to providing lesson plans and idea cards.
- to be standards-based. All resources have been selected and developed with Kentucky’s arts and humanities requirements in mind. Lesson plans include information about Kentucky’s academic standards, including the Core Content for Assessment in the Arts and Humanities.
- to instruct and inspire students. No matter where students live, they can meet artists, tour arts facilities – from performing arts centers to museums, artists’ studios to theaters – and enjoy activities and performances in dance, drama, music and visual arts. Many of the special features – such as the Tour of the Stage, the Virtual Art Museum, Will Power and Kentuckians in Dance, Drama, and Visual Arts – are directed at students as well as teachers.

Distribution and use of the Arts Toolkits across the state continues to grow. Arts Toolkits are in use in all districts. Eighty-nine percent of public schools have at least one Drama Toolkit; 84 percent have Dance; 76 percent have Visual Arts; and 57 percent have Music. In total, 10,500 Arts Toolkits have been distributed in Kentucky since 2001.

Numerous educators both from within Kentucky and outside the state use the Arts Toolkit Web site. As of October 2008, 14,319 educators have registered at the site: 4,409 Kentucky teachers, 7,665 from out-of-state (all states represented), and 2,245 from other countries. International registrations now represent 96 countries, from Argentina to Zimbabwe.

–from KET

## LEADERSHIP LETTER

Compiled by Susan Riddell, [susan.riddell@education.ky.gov](mailto:susan.riddell@education.ky.gov)

### Board teams meet KSBA's standards for ASAP for School Boards

Fifty-nine school boards and superintendents were recognized during the 2009 Kentucky School Board Association (KSBA) Annual Conference, Jan. 31 through Feb. 1, for participation in the association's ASAP (Advancing Student Achievement to Proficiency) for School Boards initiative.

Thirty-seven board/superintendent teams were recognized for achieving all 10 of the ASAP standards, while another 22 were noted for completing work on one to nine of the standards, which are:

- adopted a new (or reaffirmed existing) resolution/vision/mission statement to reflect a focus on advancing student achievement
- developed a monthly board agenda calendar with key agenda items focusing on student-achievement data and issues in a systematic way
- followed an agenda designed to focus on student achievement, featuring student presentations, staff/student recognitions,

reports and dialogues on student learning and support services

- adopted or revised one or more board policies for impact on student achievement
- reviewed multiple data indicators of student achievement in the district over a period of years, including disaggregated data, and used the information to define student success and to review and revise district goals focused on reducing achievement gaps among various groups of students
- implemented a policy requiring annual school council reports at a public meeting concerning the progress being made toward district and state-mandated educational goals (districts with large numbers of schools may require these reports on a less frequent basis) and/or conducted at least one district-wide joint board/council meeting to address this issue
- hosted at least one event, such as the KSBA community discussion model, designed to communicate to the community progress our students are making and to gather feedback centered on improving student achievement

- designed a District Improvement Plan to address student-achievement needs as identified by data indicators
- used student-achievement data in making budgetary decisions
- displayed student-achievement data in the board meeting room and in the schools to communicate results to staff, students and the community

Board teams recognized for self-reporting the completion of all 10 ASAP standards are: Augusta Independent, Berea Independent, Boone County, Bourbon County, Bowling Green Independent, Boyd County, Boyle County, Carroll County, Casey County, Daviess County, Fayette County, Floyd County, Fort Thomas Independent, Fulton Independent, Graves County, Kenton County, LaRue County, Letcher County, Lyon County, Madison County, Marion County, McCracken County, Metcalfe County, Monroe County, Montgomery County, Muhlenberg County, Ohio County, Owsley County, Paducah Independent, Pike County, Pineville Independent, Pulaski County, Rowan County, Russell Independent, Russellville Independent, Simpson County and Walton-Verona Independent.

leadership standards outlined in NAESP's "Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do."

They prioritized typical tasks from a principal's in-basket; analyzed a log of daily activities; reviewed statistics and studies about current school leaders' roles and responsibilities; examined and affirmed their own professional talents and interests; and mapped personal career plans.

Teachers and resource personnel who participated in this enriching opportunity were given a head start on becoming capable leaders for tomorrow's schools.

The second workshop more directly prepares individuals for the application and interviewing process. It is scheduled for March 13, in Louisville.

This workshop, called "Getting the Job — Done Right," is a recommended follow-up for anyone who has participated in "Previewing the 21st Century Principalship" or who already has some administrative experience or training.

Activities focus on constructing an effective resumé, assembling a professional portfolio and developing strategies for a winning interview.

Participants examine credentials and resumé of hypothetical candidates, as well as selected formats that best showcase experience, skills and abilities; learn the secrets of concise, high-impact writing; and practice interview strategies that effectively convey personal and professional beliefs about education. Participants will be prepared to go into the final hiring phase with confidence.

This workshop will be held at the University of Louisville University Club.

[www.kaesp.org](http://www.kaesp.org)

### Aspiring Principal Workshop set for March 13 in Louisville

The Kentucky Association of Elementary School Principals (KAESP) is accepting registrations for its Aspiring Principal Workshop.

This workshop is geared toward individuals being mentored for principalship, interested teachers, assistant principals and others in relevant role groups. The first workshop — "Previewing the 21st Century Principalship" — was held Jan. 9.

Participants analyzed personal strengths and areas for growth in relation to the six



Photo by Amy Wallot

### Studying Earth science

Earth and space science teacher Scott Hill talks with freshmen students at Trigg County High School. During February, his students will study units on rock history, history of the Earth and biogeochemical cycles. Across Kentucky, high school students' performance is better on multiple-choice questions about Earth and the universe than on those about the other six big ideas defined in science standards.

Talk to Us!



Kentucky Teacher wants to know what you think, what you need from the Department of Education, what you want to see in future issues.

E-mail: [kyteacher@education.ky.gov](mailto:kyteacher@education.ky.gov)

Phone: (502) 564-2000

Fax: (502) 564-3049

Write: Kentucky Teacher  
612 Capital Plaza Tower  
500 Mero St.  
Frankfort, KY 40601

*Conferences & Workshops***Kentucky Association of School Councils**

KASC (Kentucky Association of School Councils) is offering regional low-cost professional development (PD) sessions that will equip educators to return to their schools and offer the PD there for no additional cost (all materials included). In the open-response sessions, participants will design prompts, develop scoring guides, and learn to teach students to give answers that showcase what they know. Open-response is offered Feb. 4 in Mount Washington and Feb. 10 in London. Additionally, continuous (formative) assessment PD sessions are scheduled for Feb. 9 in Bowling Green and Feb. 12 in Lexington. Participants in these sessions will learn to use classroom assessment to guide instruction, monitor student progress toward academic goals and master ways to better meet student needs. For more information or to register, contact Karen Thorn-ton at [training@kasc.net](mailto:training@kasc.net) or (859) 238-2188.

[www.kasc.net](http://www.kasc.net)

**Workshops provide tools for managing energy in Kentucky schools**

KDEDI (Kentucky Department for Energy Development and Independence) is funding four energy-management workshops for K-12 schools. The workshops will be Feb. 24 in Georgetown, Feb. 26 in Cave City, March 5 in Morehead and March 6 in London. These one-day workshops will provide a step-by-step systems approach for creating both district- and school-level energy-management programs. Attendees will receive an overview of energy management, and learn about tools and curriculum to help develop an interdisciplinary team. Separate training tracks — one for administration, operations and facilities staff; the other for curriculum specialists and teachers — will target the technical and educational aspects of developing a successful energy management program. For more information, contact Pam Proctor, [pproctor@need.org](mailto:pproctor@need.org), or (859) 547-8008.

[www.kppc.org](http://www.kppc.org)

**Fossil Finders program**

Cornell University is in the process of piloting an inquiry-based science partnership and curriculum funded by the National Science Foundation called Fossil Finders. In two years, the curriculum will be available online nationwide. This summer, Cornell will be running a professional development workshop for grade 5-9 teachers in Ithaca,

N.Y., from Aug. 9-14. Teachers who are admitted into the program will earn a sizeable honorarium, a digital camera, the use of a laptop for two years and the opportunity to pilot an innovative science curriculum in their classrooms. Applications are due by March 2 and may be sent to Daniel Capps at [dkc39@cornell.edu](mailto:dkc39@cornell.edu) or Barbara Crawford at [bac45@cornell.edu](mailto:bac45@cornell.edu).

[www.fossilfinders.org](http://www.fossilfinders.org)

**The GEAR UP Institute**

CTL (Collaborative for Teaching and Learning), a nationally recognized Louisville-based provider of professional development for educators, will once again lead planning with GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), Kentucky and the GEAR UP Alliance for an annual statewide institute for educators on creating a college-going culture for middle and high school students. The GEAR UP Institute is planned for March 4 in Louisville.

GEAR UP is a national program that provides funding to states and local partnerships for programs that help prepare all students for postsecondary education. GEAR UP Kentucky works under the auspices of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education with host institutions Northern Kentucky, Murray State, Morehead State, and Western Kentucky Universities, the University of Louisville, Hazard Community and Technical College, and the Fayette County school system. For more information, contact Barbara Myerson Katz, [bkatz@ctlonline.org](mailto:bkatz@ctlonline.org), at (502) 895-9500, ext. 319.

[www.ctlonline.org](http://www.ctlonline.org)

**Davidson Institute seeks student achievers**

The Davidson Institute for Talent Development is seeking 2009 Davidson Fellows, an honor accompanied by a \$50,000, \$25,000 or \$10,000 scholarship in recognition of a significant piece of work in science, technology, mathematics, music, literature, philosophy or "Outside the Box." Application deadline is March 4. Applicants can't turn 18 before Oct. 1. They must submit an original piece of work recognized by experts in the field as significant and it must have the potential to make a positive contribution to society.

[www.davidsonfellows.org](http://www.davidsonfellows.org)

**2009 Kentucky Teaching and Learning Conference cancelled**

The Kentucky Teaching and Learning Conference (KTLC), scheduled for March 4-6, 2009, has been cancelled. The cancellation is due to the current fiscal and bud-

getary restraints across state government agencies, including local school districts. See the KTLC Web site for more information.

<http://kentuckytlc.org/KTLC>

**Siemens Web challenge**

Through March 15, middle school students can go green and team up for the Siemens "We Can Change the World Challenge," the first and only national K-12 sustainability education initiative aligned to education standards. The challenge is entirely Web-based and provides a robust collection of resources for students and teachers from interactive labs to lesson plans.

<http://siemens.discoveryeducation.com>

**NASA videoconferencing**

NASA's Digital Learning Network presents a series of videoconferences to assist educators in staying current on NASA education resources and related products.

During the videoconferences, participants will be able to submit questions to the presenter that will be addressed during the presentation.

The following topics will be covered from 4-5 p.m. EST each date:

- Kepler Mission, March 25
- Meteorology: An Educator's Resource Guide for Inquiry-Based Learning, April 29
- NASA Explores Virtual Worlds, May 27

For more information, contact Caryn Long at [caryn.long@nasa.gov](mailto:caryn.long@nasa.gov).

<http://dln.nasa.gov/dln/content/webcast>  
[www.nasa.gov/education](http://www.nasa.gov/education)

**KRA fall conference**

The Kentucky Reading Association is issuing a call for proposals for its annual fall conference, scheduled for Sept. 17-19 in Louisville. This year's theme is "Reading Leads to Proficiency." Conference proposal forms can be found at the KRA's Web site. Proposals are due by May 31 and must be mailed to James Phillips, Conference Chairperson, Hardin County Schools, 65 W. A. Jenkins Road, Elizabethtown, KY 42701. For more information, contact Phillips at [james.phillips@hardin.kyschools.us](mailto:james.phillips@hardin.kyschools.us), (270) 769-8853.

[www.kyreading.org](http://www.kyreading.org)

*Contests & Other Events***Lincoln educational offerings**

The Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission is announcing the following educational offerings for students and teachers:

(Continued on page 15)



Photo by Amy Wallitt

**BULLETIN BOARD** (continued)

- National Teach-In on Lincoln: Save the Date, Feb. 12
  - Lincoln Legacy Schools recognition certificates
  - Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission online teacher resources
  - Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission posters
  - National History Day Lincoln Teacher sourcebook
  - Abraham Lincoln: Unfinished Legacy. This collection of articles and classroom resources features a forward by James McPherson and the lead article by ALBC Co-Chairman Harold Holzer-plus more. Abraham Lincoln: An Unfinished Legacy is available online at [www.nhd.org](http://www.nhd.org), or for a print copy, contact Ann Claunch at [ann@nhd.org](mailto:ann@nhd.org).
- [www.history.com/lincoln](http://www.history.com/lincoln)  
[www.abrahamlincoln200.org](http://www.abrahamlincoln200.org)

**'I am Kentucky Proud'**

Kentucky school children can show why "I Am Kentucky Proud" in the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's annual Poster and Essay Contest. Students in K-8 may enter a poster, an essay or both. Statewide winners in each grade will win a \$100 savings bond and be honored March 10 in Frankfort. Mail entries to Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Poster and Essay Contest, 100 Fair Oaks Lane, 5th Floor, Frankfort, KY 40601, and postmarked no later than Feb. 13. For complete contest rules and an entry form, go to the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Web Site, [www.kyagr.com](http://www.kyagr.com), click on Education Resources under the Programs menu, click on Agriculture Education and click on 2009 Poster & Essay Contest Rules and Entry Forms. For more information, contact Elizabeth McNulty at [elizabeth.mcnulty@ky.gov](mailto:elizabeth.mcnulty@ky.gov) or (502) 564-4983.

**National Underground Railroad contest**

This contest invites students to write an essay of not more than 2,000 words (supplemented with a bibliography) conveying what lessons they believe emerge from the history of the Underground Railroad and the movement that resulted in the abolishment of slavery in the United States that can help guide the abolition of contemporary forms of slavery that exist in today's world. Entries may be submitted as either Microsoft Word or PDF documents or both. All entries must be received by March 15, and can be e-mailed to Bob Nasson at [rnasson@nationalhistoryclub.org](mailto:rnasson@nationalhistoryclub.org). Applicants should type "NURFC" in the subject line.

**ASHRAE Donald T. MacClellan Scholarship**

The American Society of Heating Refrigeration and Air-conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) Donald T. MacClellan Scholarship, in the amount of \$500, is awarded annually and is available to individuals entering or currently enrolled in an undergraduate program in engineering, science or engineering technology in which the student is pursuing a course of study that traditionally has been a preparatory curriculum for a career in HVAC&R. More information and online application available at the ASHRAE chapter Web site at <http://bluegrass.ashraeregion7.org> or e-mail questions to [student\\_activities@bluegrass.ashraeregion7.org](mailto:student_activities@bluegrass.ashraeregion7.org). Application deadline is March 15.

**DNA Day Essay**

The American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) is sponsoring the fourth annual DNA Day Essay Contest for students in grades 9-12. Winning students will receive cash prizes, and teachers of first-place winners will receive a \$2,000 grant for laboratory genetics equipment. The deadline to enter is March 16. For more information, contact Angie Wong at (301) 634-7326.

[www.ashg.org/education](http://www.ashg.org/education)

**Kentucky Geographic Alliance grants**

The Kentucky Geographic Alliance is offering eight \$500 grants for classroom teachers. The purpose of the grant is to promote geography education in schools and to enhance geographic literacy of students. Teachers who have been through professional development training related to environmental education or geography may apply for this grant. Deadline is Feb. 20. For more information, contact Kay Gandy at [kay.gandy@wku.edu](mailto:kay.gandy@wku.edu).

**Resources****Teacher releases 'lesson plan' for teachers**

Michele Luck, a high school social studies teacher at Bryan Station High School (Fayette County), has written a plan for the new teacher. Her book, "A Lesson Plan for Teachers, New and Old," is a practically-written guide to help the new teacher — or even experienced ones — make a positive transition to success in the classroom. From tips on organization to working with parents to grading and including special education modifications, the book addresses the topics prevalent in the public schools today. The book also encourages the creation of a



Photo submitted

**Using history to tell stories**

*Award-winning author Shelley Pearsall confers with 5th-grade language arts students at Beechwood Elementary School (Beechwood Independent). Pearsall led the students in an examination of primary historical documents, helping them seek out details they could include in their short stories to make the stories both lively and accurate to the time period.*

"high expectations" classroom, where students are challenged to learn and delve into a higher level of preparation. "A Lesson Plan for Teachers, New and Old" is available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) or from the publisher, Lulu, at [lulu.com](http://lulu.com).

**'Five Kentucky Poets Laureate: An Anthology'**

The Kentucky Arts Council is offering a free classroom set (40 paperback copies) of "Five Kentucky Poets Laureate: An Anthology" to all Kentucky high schools, along with an online study guide developed by Sue Churchill, a writing resource teacher for the Woodford County school district, to accompany the book. The new anthology, published by the Kentucky Arts Council, includes more than 40 works of poetry and prose by a distinguished group of Kentucky writers: the commonwealth's poets laureate. The anthology includes the writings of Richard Taylor (Kentucky Poet Laureate 1999-2000), James Baker Hall (2001-02), Joe Survant

(2003-04), Sena Jeter Naslund (2005-06) and Jane Gentry (2007-08). For a classroom set, go to [http://artscouncil.ky.gov/forms/PoetAnthologyTeach\\_reg.htm](http://artscouncil.ky.gov/forms/PoetAnthologyTeach_reg.htm). To access the study guides and resources, go to <http://artscouncil.ky.gov/PoetAnthology/PoetAnthology.htm>.

**100 Web tools for elementary teachers**

The Internet can be a scary place for elementary teachers. On one hand, teachers want to share the Internet as a wonderful tool with their students, but on the other, they worry about safety and helping them find the most useful resources without getting lost on the information superhighway. Because of this, a listing has been put together by [smartteaching.org](http://smartteaching.org) of some of the best sites online for elementary teachers and students, plus a few tools to help keep everything together.

[www.smartteaching.org/blog/2008/08/100-awesome-free-web-tools-for-elementary-teachers](http://www.smartteaching.org/blog/2008/08/100-awesome-free-web-tools-for-elementary-teachers)

# Reading First second to none in Kentucky classrooms

By Susan Riddell

susan.riddell@education.ky.gov

Reading First has long been considered an initiative to engage young readers and make sure they are at or above reading level by the time they leave primary classrooms.

However, teachers in Kentucky also are benefitting from this federal initiative.

Reading First focuses on putting proven methods of early reading instruction in K-3 classrooms. Through Reading First, states and districts receive support to apply scientifically-based research – and the proven instructional and assessment tools consistent with this research – to ensure all children learn to read well by the end of 3rd grade.

Funds assist increased professional development to guarantee that all teachers have the skills they need to teach these programs effectively. The initiative also supports teachers using screening and diagnostic tools and classroom-based instructional reading assessments to measure how well students are reading and to monitor their progress.

While students are excelling through Reading First, teachers are using the initiative to gain confidence in their teaching skills and move into leadership positions.

“Since we are required to receive 80 hours of professional development (through Reading First), I have been a participant in many trainings that have made me a better reading teacher,” said Venita Graves, a primary teacher at Thomas Edison Elementary School (Covington Independent). “I feel more confident in what I am doing.”

“Teachers have become educational leaders in our building,” Graves added. “They go to trainings and come back and share or train other teachers. Teachers plan more explicit lessons than before Reading First. We now have a structured approach to teaching reading to a diverse group of students.”

According to Graves, schools funded for Reading First had low reading scores and a high rate of poverty starting out.

There are 72 Reading First schools in Kentucky. Like Thomas Edison Elementary, Owen County Primary School also is seeing students make great strides in reading thanks to Reading First.

“Our school would have never qualified for the Reading First grant if we hadn’t been struggling with teaching our students to read,” said Teresa Dempsey, a primary teacher at Owen County Primary. “Reading First has been all about change; change for the better. Our students deserve the best, and that is what Reading First has given us. ... Owen County Primary now has students who are exceptional readers. I can’t



Photos by Amy Wallot

AhMaya Sneed, left, helps Lilly England follow along by using her finger during Venita Graves’ kindergarten reading class at Thomas Edison Elementary School (Covington Independent).

think of another educational initiative that could have given us that. We owe a lot to Reading First.”

Graves said Thomas Edison Elementary was awarded the Reading First grant in January 2004 and started the initiative for the 2004-05 school year.

“Our KCCT (Kentucky Core Content Test) scores were low, and we had a high number of at-risk students,” she said. “The Reading First grant gave Edison the opportunity to have a scientifically-based reading research program,” Graves added. “Through the grant, we have built classroom libraries and professional development for teachers based on the five components of reading, and we’ve implemented assessments to closely monitor students’ reading progress. The grant has given us the opportunity to have reading interventionists work with our students in small group or individually-based on specific needs.”

Both Thomas Edison Elementary and Owen County Primary use GRADE (Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation) and DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) assessments to monitor student progress.

GRADE is a norm-referenced group test that helps teachers confidently assess pre-literacy, emerging reading and core reading skills; plan focused instruction; and document student progress. This reading assessment provides detailed diagnostic information about individual skill levels,



Damieon Mitchell writes words using similar letters during Venita Graves’ kindergarten reading class. The school’s Reading First grant has allowed interventionists to work with students in small groups or individually based on specific needs.

making it possible to identify students who may need further testing and intervention. Two parallel forms at every level, each with fall and spring norms, make it possible to follow progress and monitor growth over time.

DIBELS are a set of standardized, individually administered measures of early literacy development. They are designed to be short (one-minute) fluency measures used to reg-

ularly monitor the development of pre-reading and early reading skills.

“Monitoring is the key to the success of Reading First,” said Mark Cooper, district coach and assistant superintendent in Owen County. “One of the best moves we made was the addition of Kim Willhoite as a part-time data coordinator. She processes the data for the principals, reading coaches and teachers, reducing the duties of the reading coaches so they can spend more time in the classrooms supporting the teachers. The effective use of the data is a big reason that Owen County’s GRADE scores went from 60 in 2007 to 89 in 2008. Our teachers have grown so much; they will not let a student fail. They look at the data and make sure that every student receives the instruction that they need to be successful.”

Test scores at Thomas Edison Elementary have risen as well.

“According to GRADE, our students have grown from 8.8 percent reading on or above grade level in September 2004 to 77 percent reading on or above grade level in spring 2008,” Graves said. “Individual teachers have accumulated more than 480 hours of professional development based on literacy during that time.”

While reading test scores are proving these schools are headed in the right direction, the most telling signs are still in the faces of the students each day, as well as the teachers who know they are making a difference, according to Dempsey.

“A lot of our students were great decoders prior to Reading First,” Dempsey said. “They could sound out any word you wanted, but may not have comprehended any of the material. Now, students have necessary skills and strategies in all five essential reading components and can understand the material they read. I have seen students who have a greater love of reading. They don’t complain about reading activities anymore. You see students with books in their hands enjoying the stories they read. What better benefit could there be?”

“Reading First has encouraged me to constantly search for new and better techniques for teaching reading,” Dempsey added. “I am always on the lookout for best teaching practices that are research-based. In general, I think Reading First has taught teachers to be the best teaching professionals they can be. It has made us all want to be better teachers.”

## MORE INFO...

<http://education.ky.gov/JumpTo?jump=RFIK>

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